

SPECIAL ON BRIXTON

The Fire THIS Time

BY now the social and economic background to the Brixton riots will be familiar to most people. A housing waiting list, in the borough in which Brixton is situated, of 18,000; a third of the housing stock sub-standard; high unemployment with about 2 out of 3 of the unemployed being black; a high robbery rate (in fact the highest in London, it being twice the nearest figure); next to no social amenities.

This is all very true. The area around the Railton Road (Frontline)/Mayall Road triangle is inhabited by mainly black council tenants and mainly white squatters (leftists/anarchists/marginals). Empty houses are also used by local blacks as drinking and gambling clubs, dope centres and venues for all-night

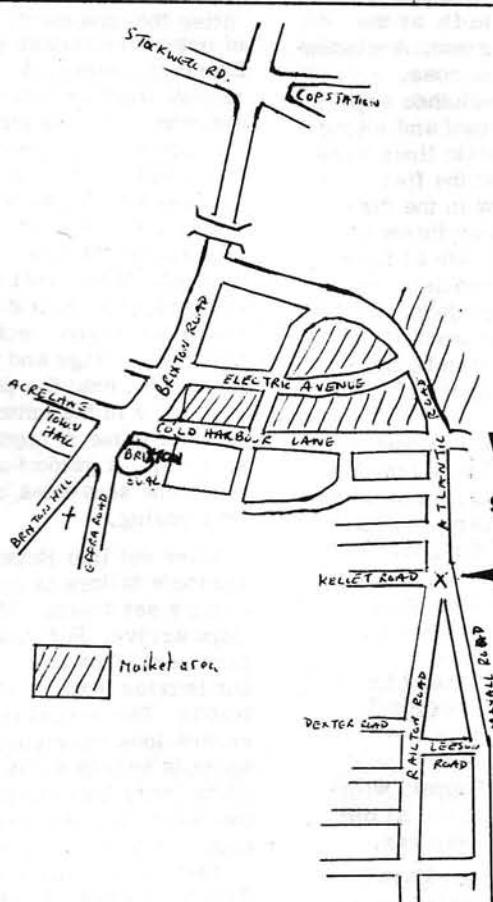
'Blues' (parties with sound systems pumping out non-stop reggae). Down the Frontline a black crafts centre has recently started in one empty building and further down a former black bookshop is now a squatted anarchist bookshop. People down here tend to live on the left-overs of capitalist society. For

years, the Triangle has been on the drawing board for demolition but only in the last two has any attempt been made to carry this out. But the council keep running out of money so it has been coming down piece-meal, making a rough area look even rougher. However, the maze of streets west of the Frontline look brighter as they have increasingly come under the occupation of white, liberal professionals and self-made respectable blacks.

Down the Frontline there are two distinct cultures - the black and the white - and it is the black culture which predominates and on the fringes of which the young whites participate. Dope and Reggae. The blacks have their own language - Patois - and this gives them an independent cultural identity that is not easily co-opted or diluted. Perhaps the most relevant aspect of this culture (in terms of the riots) is that it is very much a street culture (despite British weather). Winter or summer there are always crowds of blacks out on the Frontline rapping, smoking, laughing, visibly occupying their social space.

But it is the cops who claim they control the streets of London. Certainly in the two years I've lived on the Frontline I've noticed that the cops have always tried to intimidate the Frontline community with constant vehicle and foot patrols and, less frequently, horse patrols. (The most bizarre policing incident I've ever seen happened a few months ago when a cop on horseback chased someone down Mayall Road.)

Where
it
started



Actually, the cops know they cannot fully control the Frontline. Despite their claims and their patrols the police policy on the Frontline has been one of containment. Periodic raids to remind locals who is boss and to warn them not to get out of hand. Operations such as the one in 1978 when the SPG sealed off the Frontline and searched anybody and everybody have caused outrage. Blacks, especially the young second generation, are, on the whole, defiant. A month or so ago a black motorist tore up the ticket a cop had just given him and threw it back in his face, to cheers from the assembled crowd.

The cops constantly use the Sus laws to stop and search young blacks. And they do this with vengeance. Another event on the Frontline will illustrate this. Two vehicles collided and the cops on the scene immediately searched both vehicles and their drivers and passengers. The accident was secondary. With such everyday deprivation and such mindless state bullying, for being deprived, the one thing which unites the disparate elements of the Frontline community is a burning hatred for the cops. What most surprised local people when the Bristol riots happened last year was that they hadn't happened here first. Another surprise was that the anarchist graffiti which went up after Bristol - 'Bristol yesterday, Brixton today' has taken a year to be made real. The establishment knew this too. Only a few months ago Lambeth Council published a report criticising the cops and predicting trouble.

The week before the riots

The constant intense policing of Brixton and of the Frontline in particular was heightened in the week leading up to the riots. At 11pm on Friday April 3rd., the Frontline area around Dexter and Leeson Roads was sealed off by cops with no-one being allowed in or out for over an hour. Over 20 arrests were made. Then, in the following week, Operation Swamp 81 saw over 1,000 people (mainly young blacks) stopped and searched. This was all adding to the increasing frustration of local people. At about 2.30 am on Fri 10th I was stopped and threatened by 3 young blacks with bottles. This confused and angered me (it was the first time I'd ever been hassled on the Frontline) and it was only later that I realised that they must have been victims of 'Swamp 81', perhaps only minutes before meeting me.

On Friday 10th at about 5pm a young black with a knife wound was stopped on the Frontline by cops. What followed is the source of many different stories. Whatever happened (and it isn't necessary to seek justification for what followed anyway) the cops were attacked by a gang of locals, the young bloke freed and taken to hospital. A brief battle with cop reinforcements occurred. The cops took this as a challenge and so the following day, Sat 11th., the Frontline was under police occupation.

Usually the cops patrol the Frontline. But on that Saturday they parked up and down the Frontline every 50 yards, just sitting in their vans waiting for something to happen. It was a warm day so the Frontline was full of people standing around doing the usual things and, this time, eyeing the occupation force with hatred. All afternoon most people expected trouble of some sort. At about 5pm in the afternoon a plain-clothes cop received the free gift of a brick on the head for wanting to search a black guy's car. Up in Atlantic Road an arrest was attempted and this further angered an already angry crowd. Most of this crowd was gathered in the space at the apex of Railton Road/Mayall Road, with the cops right on the apex itself and is at the beginning of Atlantic Road. The odd brick began to fly at the cops isolated in the crowd. A window was smashed. Tension rose. Electric. Then plain-clothes cops appeared from the crowd and joined the uniformed lot. Battle lines were now clearly drawn and the first barrage of bricks flew in the direction of the cops. They threw a few back and charged. We at first retreated a little but realising we were many, there were few, we stopped. Then, spontaneously, the whole afternoon's tension being released like a spring, we charged them.

(What follows may seem confused and incoherent. But this is how I experienced the rioting. I report on only what I saw and heard. Certain incidents are omitted for obvious reasons.)

A massive surge of adrenalin. War whoops. Class war whoops. 'Whoops ! Class War !' A scramble for bricks. 'I must have a brick. Where are the bricks ?' A hail of bricks. The cops are confused as they realise they are no longer in control. Puppets without a role. They look at us, at one another and around themselves.

Them. Run. Away. Down Mayall Road, leaving their vehicles in our hands. In the twinkling of a rioting

eye the vehicles are smashed up and turned over. A light is instantly provided and poof ! Up goes a cops van. Wild cheers. Laughter, Dances of joy. I see a comrade and we beam solidarity at one another.

Our savage celebrations are interrupted by a charge of cops. (They had regrouped with reinforcements). The crowd splits. The cops are mad. Truncheons thrashing. I run to safety up a side street and meet another comrade. As we point with child-like glee at the rising pall of smoke; a white guy is bricked, inexplicably. He is immediately defended by black youths and all eyes look around for the idiot thrower. A nearby friend has transport and as I go to seek its availability a black guy bearing an old grudge grabs me, revenge in his eyes. Before he can find an excuse to brick me (was the brick which hit the other guy meant for me ?) I make it plain that assistance is needed. Van not available. Questions from friends. Tune in to police radio. They are out of their heads. Sounds of windows going in on Coldharbour Lane. Back onto the streets.

In Coldharbour Lane an SPG van is on its side like some stranded whale. A boutique has its windows smashed and twisted dummies litter the pavement. Crowds of onlookers. Glass smashes in Electric Avenue. A jewellers is looted. Another further up. Black and white youths kick their way through the roller shutters (!) I watch out for cops on Brixton Road. Announce to the passing shoppers, who are all eyes, that free jewellery is available should they want it. Am ignored. Notice that the jewellers is, perfectly, next door to a consumer advice centre. Necklaces, bracelets, rings and watches are thrown out onto the pavement. Jewellery in the gutter. Great ! I have a game of football with some bracelets, a game I can't lose. There are some squabbles over loot. Depressing.

Move out into Brixton Road. Burton's tailors is done in and a dummy set ablaze. Magical sight. Cops arrive. Pull dummy onto pavement. The tube station is closed but Brixton Road is still open to traffic. The motorists and bus passengers look in confusion as looting spreads to both sides of the road. A black youth kicks in plate glass windows as if he is swatting flies. More cops. Burglar alarms scream out to deaf ears. More and more cops. Running battles. More looting. Then I notice there's no more traffic. The

cops have sealed the main road off from the cop shop to the Town Hall. Looting and smashing now all along Brixton Road area, the market area and up Acre Lane. My name is called out. Another comrade. We shake hands muttering 'Great ! Great !' I give him a garbled resume. Bulk of crowd now around Brixton oval. Woolworths smashed and looted. Television sets, stereo, carted off. Some smashed. Occasional cop van races through and is smashed. Many in the crowd realise cops have to pass us to get into the battle area so crowds line up on either side of Brixton Road with bottles and bricks. 'Here's another' Smash. 'And another' Smash. A proletarian fair-ground. 'And the next one please !' Smash. Everyone a winner. Cops wise up and a convoy arrives, stops and a horde of meanies piles out, truncheons thrashing. Crowd splits up but sniping still possible. A charge and we escape up a side street. All casual, like, we call into a pub for a drink. A rumour goes round that a cop has been kidnapped. My comrade and I smirk into our glasses.

We decide to go to the Frontline. It is now dark and we worm our way through back streets avoiding cop cordons. We approach the top of the Frontline along Kellett Road and are met with an unbelievable sight. Three rows of cops stretch across the Frontline, facing into it. A non-stop hail of bricks batters their shields. Then suddenly a molotov (the first I've ever seen) comes up and over and smash ! whoof ! lands on some shields which are hurriedly dropped. Look down Mayall Road and see the Windsor Castle ablaze. The Frontline is barricaded with burning vehicles. I'm elated and pissed off. Elated that the Frontline is a no-go area and pissed off that I'm now cut off from defending it. I look around. Exhausted and injured cops sitting on the ground smoking fags. The fires, the cops, the atmosphere. Class war. 'Will they bring the Army in ?' Belfast.

We detour to the south end of the Frontline which is also sealed off. Watch a shop blaze. The sub post office has disappeared. Back to the Town Hall area. Cops now holding strategic positions - the big junction at the Town Hall, the cops station etc. Still looting. More friends arrive. Talk. Back to Frontline. All fires out by now. Its getting on for midnight. Things much quieter. Cops slowly regaining control. Up to cop shop. Barricaded with cop vans. Under siege. Cops attack us and force people down back alley. Beatings. Arrests. We are split up. I wander back along Brixton Road surveying damage. Only a few civilians about now. Cops are in control. Get off the streets. Talk to friends for hours and then back to Frontline for celebratory drink. One last look at the blitzed Frontline in the dawn light and then sleep. I dream of cops, cops and more cops.

Sunday 12th. Tired, hung-over. Rage at the newspapers. Commissioner McNee and others have the gall to blame 'outside agitators' (The cops were the outside agitators) Frontline is crowded with people debating. Lots of cops patrolling warily. Firemen inspect damage. Discuss events with friends. News of arrests. Early evening. More trouble, but more easily contained as over 1,000 more cops are in the area. Brixton is sealed off up as far as Kennington Oval. Fascist attack in Villa Road. Cop station again heavily protected. Cops use 'Nightsun' helicopter for first time. (Can light up an area the size of a football pitch and is fitted with infra-red cameras). More cops. They're gaining the upper hand.

A long week

Since the weekend there has been confusion and paranoia. The gutter press stress not only 'outside agitators' but also 'white anarchists'

conspiracy'. Comrades raided (Who's next?) Where are they held? Which court will they appear in? First fines are heavy. £200. Hassles about bail. Newspapers print photographs showing faces. (Who's next.) Frontline quieter than usual. Massive police presence but this isn't immediately visible. Coaches in side streets, up to two miles away. Reports filter back about treatment of those arrested. Heavy. Can't sleep. (How can the people of N. Ireland have survived 10 years of this without cracking up.) The black community is divided. The rally for Easter Sunday is called off. Recriminations. The Brixton Defence Committee and Lambeth Law Centre are organising counter-information and compiling a list of cases against the police. It's still early days yet.

Easter Weekend. Frontline much quieter than usual. Brixton still occupied. All varieties of political groupings trying to colonise the local initiative. (The worst I saw was 'Militant'. Headline - 'Brixton - Blame the Tories') Difficult to judge the atmosphere. People having re-think, trying to get these extraordinary events in perspective. It is now a higher level of confrontation. All the shops in the market and main road areas are boarded up. For how long ? There is talk of more 'aid' for the community. Sticking plaster for leprosy. Class society is rotten through and through. Where will the next eruption take place ? The struggle here is far from over.

Mustapha Brique

CONTACT POINT

WOULD all comrades arrested or knowing of anyone arrested during the Brixton Festival, please contact Box Z, 121 Railton Road, London SE24 immediately.



BRIXTON

No Apologies

The week preceding the riots had seen an increase in the already, intense policing of the streets of Brixton. (On Friday 3rd April Railton Road was sealed off in a police raid; all that week Operation Swamp 81 had been going on resulting in 1,000 people – mainly black youth – being stopped and searched).

After an incident in Railton Road on Friday 10th, an incident which was being dealt with by local people, the police arrived and started making trouble. This resulted in an occupation force of police descending on the Front Line on Saturday 11th April. The cops sat there all day waiting for trouble. Then at about 5.00 in the afternoon they provoked it.

The response of the local community was immediate and decisive. "These are our streets and we won't take any more police oppression." This response was spontaneous and there were no leaders or outside agitators. The police occupation force was attacked and routed. It was a joyous occasion as people felt that here, for the first time, they were taking part in mass direct action to control the streets of their community and were succeeding.

This mass action, at first an attack on the immediate enemy, the police, rippled out into the market and main road areas and people, so long denied the full fruits of their labour, took what they wanted. The size of this action was such that the police were overwhelmed. The people of Brixton were proving that the State is not invulnerable. With materials which were readily available to everyone they had the police on the run. For most of Saturday evening the Front Line was a no-go area. The police, outnumbered, bewildered and scared, concentrated their efforts on holding operations, the chief one being the defence of the police station. This allowed people to take what they wanted right from under the noses of the police. Usually the police put the protection of property before people but on that festive night they were forced to change their priorities – they had to save their own necks first and the goods in the shops came second. They became so worried that C.S. gas and a military advisor – a naval officer – were brought to Brixton police station.

The following day, Sunday, saw a repeat of the previous day's defence of the community and again people took what they needed. The police meanwhile had drafted in an extra 1,000 personnel. The whole of Brixton was sealed off and under occupation.

We do not pretend that the weekend's events were all positive. We would like to see a situation where anti-social acts (rape, intimidation of community members by others etc) are dealt with by the local community and not by any external authority such as the police. The stabbing incident of Friday, 10th was being taken care of by local people until the police arrived and provoked trouble.

The responses of the authorities

The attempt by the authorities to call the events of the weekend a 'race riot' fell flat immediately. So then they tried to blame 'outside agitators' and 'white anarchists' for the whole thing. This was a crude attempt to distract attention from the real problems with the implicit assumption that local police – community relations are so good that trouble could only be started by outsiders: An obvious lie. It also assumes that the local community are incapable of taking the actions they carried out so well. A double lie.

Let us stress again that the riots were a spontaneous, un-led response of local people – black and white, female and male, young and old – to the militarisation of the streets of Brixton by the Metropolitan Police and also a response against the kind of society in which such everyday oppression is part.

We live here and are part of this community. As anarchists we believe people should take control of every aspect of their lives without the mediation of cops, governments, money, bosses, political parties etc. Where we differ from other so-called revolutionary groups is that we believe the State and its agents – cops, soldiers, bureaucrats etc – are parasites and enemies of the people and that direct action is the way people start to take control of their lives.

The left-wing groups active in Brixton are forever calling for revolution but on Saturday 11th they were nowhere to be seen. It was only after the cops had cleared the streets that they moved in and claimed the riots as a victory. These groups and various "community leaders" have apologised for the riots, claiming more money will solve the problems. However, the problem is not simply bad housing and unemployment or even too many police on the streets. The problem goes much deeper and is not just confined to Brixton – it runs throughout class society. At home, at work, at school and in the community generally, we are everywhere confronted with the rigid hierarchy of power in terms of class, sex and race. Everywhere we are kept apart, the easier to be controlled. The Front Line stretches further than Brixton. It goes to Bristol, Belfast, Berlin and beyond. It is everywhere the police and state authorities show their faces.

The common demand on Saturday night was for the police to fuck off from our streets and release all those arrested and drop all charges. The State's response was "we control the streets and that's all there is to it". To keep the police off the streets means more self-activity of the kind shown by the community over that weekend (Brixton Police Station, Camberwell Magistrates Court, Brixton Prison, Barclays Bank the list of rubbish to be cleared away is endless).

For people who live outside Brixton who wish to express solidarity – you have police on your streets.

Note: There are no photographs in this for obvious reasons.

SOME BRIXTON ANARCHISTS

BRIXTON BULLETINS

From The Front Line

Monday 13th April.

AFTER years of street crimes and brutality, and despite the infiltration from outside of thousands of paid provocateurs, the Brixton Police has finally been taught a short, sharp lesson by the local community. It has been a constant source of amazement to observers just how long the local population have allowed these professional scare-mongers to roam the streets unchecked, harassing and beating up the youth and terrorising the residents.

Over the last three years there has been a marked increase in the street crime and violence carried out by these so-called 'protectors'. The local population has stood by helplessly while their children have been snatched off the streets by these overtly racist and sexist gangs of thugs - kidnapped under the sinister 'sus law' they operate.

At least one recognised public execution has already been carried out by these murderous thugs para-military wing, the SPG, whilst dozens of 'unsolved' murders, which have happened behind the closed doors of police stations and prisons, are readily attributable to these state-styled stormtroopers and their cronies.

Relative calm returned to the streets on Sunday, only after they adopted their by now familiar ploy of following an afternoon of unbridled mayhem with a swift withdrawal at twilight (Lewisham residents are all too aware of this tactic). But the remarks of one of the thugs 'guarding' Stockwell station sums up the measure of their defeat - in a dejected tone he muttered to his mates: 'The whole world will be laughing at us...' 'But he was wrong. The world is not amused at having these gangs of thugs strutting around its streets under the guise of 'law n' order'. The world will want to know ! :-

** Will the blonde cop whose arrogance and brutality, according to eye-witness accounts, provoked the residents to action on Friday be brought to justice ? ..

** Will there be a committee to investigate why the police chief lied to community leaders over the withdrawal of massive police presence on Saturday ? ..

** Why media reporters on the spot outside the Frontline refused to accept as contributory 'facts' massive unemployment amongst the youth of Brixton and the state rundown of services and housing coupled to increased police repression ? ..

** Who are the sinister brains behind the Brixton riots who planned and executed massive action against the community ...

But, above all, will remain the question of just how long are we prepared to put up with these arrogant, marauding thugs who answer to no-one but themselves ? ..

Just Passing Through

ON Sunday a group of subversive people from Worthing went up to Brixton on a sight-seeing trip, and would you believe they got caught up in a riot that just happened to be taking place. To cut a long and heroic story short, let me just fill you in on the bad news - two of them got nicked.

Graeme Thompson was arrested at about 6.30 p.m. and was charged with throwing missiles, having an offence weapon and being generally involved in a riot. His picture appeared on page two of the Sun on Monday. At about 9.30 p.m. Andrew Carroll was arrested. He was caught at the end of an alley by the S.P.G. and was badly beaten up: gash in the head, many bruises on his neck and back, and he had a finger broken. He was also assaulted in an S.P.G. van and at the Pig Station. He was, among other things, charged with assaulting a Police officer - such a charge is so fucking sickening that it really is beyond contempt.

Both their cases come up on May 5th - if you want to help in any way give a ring to Graeme (66200) or Andrew (64517) or write to 11 Lincett Drive, Worthing.



Make-up artist

Scene: the newsroom of a national newspaper. Chief Editor and minions dozing amid piles of empty paper coffee-cups and cigarette-ends.

Enter reporters:

Reporter: Hey Chief, the Blacks are rioting in Brixton !'

Editor: 'Yowser ! Yowser ! I can see it ! Blazing cars ! Rampaging mob ! Policemen lying in pools of blood ! Looting ! What a story ! Right, wake up you guys ! Get your arses over to Brixton and bring me back a story or I'll... heads will roll !'

Bleary-eyed reporters rush to door, pulling on coats and looks of sincerity.

Editor: 'And don't forget ! I want a couple of you beaten up. I think it's your turn, Charlie, then we can really grab the readers' sympathy.'

Charlie: 'Aw, come on Boss ! I got it at Bristol, why not let Bobby get it this time ?'

Editor: 'Be gone ! And if you're off work for less than 3 weeks - you're fired !'

Next day:

Editor: 'OK, guys, nice work yesterday, but the Word has come down "This is not a race riot."'

Reporter: 'Shit ! I'm going to have to scrap my entire story !'

Editor: 'Yeh, I know, it's tough. But Numero Uno, blessed be His name, has decided on a great angle for this one. I tell ya, it'll really knock you out !'

Reporters, in unison:

'What is it, O Mighty One ?'

Editor: 'It's ... "Conspiracy" and

Cont. on Page 7

POLITICAL STATUS NOW?

THE British govt. has been trying since March 1st., '76 to criminalise the struggle for Irish Freedom, by attempting to force the misnomer upon Irish Republican Prisoners of War in 'H' Blocks and in Armagh Womens Prison. Cajoled, beaten, degraded (most notably through forced searches of the prisoners' anal passages i.e. the so-called 'mirror-search') and denied all physical and mental stimuli (being confined to a bare cell for twenty four hours of each and every day), over 400 Republican prisoners 'on the Blanket' have determinedly and resolutely resisted the British 'criminalisation' policy. In short, Republican POWs have refused to give credence to the absurdity which Britain blindly bolsters. The hypocrisy and blatant illogicality of Britain's stance on status can be demonstrated very easily:-

In February, Humphrey Atkins, on learning of a second (now ongoing) hunger strike, stated that the British Govt. 'will not concede that it should establish within the normal Northern Ireland prison regime a special set of conditions for particular groups of prisoners...'

Fact: The British Govt., despite Atkins' assertions to the contrary, at the present moment affords 'special category'/political status to 166 Republican prisoners who are held in the Cages of Long Kesh. That same political status is also afforded to a like number of Loyalist prisoners (a point incidentally which many Loyalists play down).

Fact: 'Special category'/political status was introduced in June '72 after a hunger strike by Republican Prisoners of War in Crumlin Rd., Prison, Belfast. It was ironically introduced by Willie Whitelaw, the present British Home Secretary; a Tory.

Fact: The past five years of the 'blanket' protest by over 400 male and female Republican prisoners was engendered by the British decision to withdraw political status from Republican prisoners charged and sentenced after March '76.

Fact: The first hunger strike came about after those long years of suffering. The seven hunger strikers terminated their death fast after 53 days, on Dec 18th last, when the

British Govt. gave assurances that the 5 demands of the hunger strikers would be met. They reneged totally on the implementation of those assurances which in turn gave way to this present hunger strike.

Fact: Republican prisoners 'on the Blanket' and on hunger strike have shared the common experience as their comrades with status. Involved in the same struggle, standing side by side as comrades in the same Movement, when captured, they were all 'processed' through the same judicial sausage machine which the British pompously refer to as the 'due process'. They were all arrested under special legislation, held and interrogated in special interrogation centres such as the notorious Castlereagh, where 'confessions' were extracted under torture (as Amnesty International investigations proved). All were charged with 'scheduled' i.e. politically-motivated 'offences', and subjected to periods of remand

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of anything up to two years (now dubbed 'Internment by Remand'), and subjected to political show-trials in no-jury Diplock Courts where the single judge presiding over the farce handed out vicious politically pre-determined sentences to politically pre-determined verdicts.

How in the light of the above facts (which will bear up to scrutiny) can the British continue to refuse Bobby Sands and his comrade hunger strikers, and the other 400 'blanket' protesters in 'H' Blocks and Armagh Gaol the rightful recognition: the political 'status' that is rightfully theirs.

We ask you to try to prevent further torture and suffering. Save the lives of the hunger strikers. Support the National Smash 'H' Block/Armagh Committee and force the British Govt. to re-afford Political Status. Support the 5 just demands of the hunger strikers.

From the BAC

THE HONOURABLE MEMBER...

Bobby Sands, M.P.: the bitter-sweet irony of that is not lost on us. The republican hunger striker has been returned to parliament with a larger vote than that received by our P.M., Margaret Thatcher. So, who has the greater mandate for the voters? Bobby Sands received over 30,000 votes, each cross on the pieces of paper written in blood and anger.

At a meeting at Conway Hall in London, the same night as Bobby Sand's victory, republican energies were at a high pitch. Sinn Fein had organised the meeting to mobilise support for all hunger strikers in H-Block, Armagh and for the Irish political prisoners in Britain. The meeting, tightly organised, dynamic and desperately optimistic about the significance of the recently-announced vote, was chaired by a member of Sinn Fein, and included speakers from Belfast, a solicitor who works on behalf of republican prisoners, the mother of a murdered IRA soldier and various shades of speakers from other groups in London declaiming solidarity with

the Irish people. All of which is enough to make your street-fighting anarchist groan at the grim realisation of all that invective and fervour in a cause that is not anarchism and for the establishment of a form of Irish self-determination that is often almost as authoritarian as the regime now being given the boot.

However, let us not pour too much political scorn or too much suffocating academia on republican achievements to date, nor on the examples Irish people have set in terms of propaganda, direct action, commitment of lives, that their fight against British occupation has meant. In other circumstances, we would not be so critical.

The thousands of votes cast for Bobby Sands are a major repudiation of Britain's criminalisation policy of republican prisoners and the determination of the hunger strikers should right now be burning in the hearts of all political prisoners in Britain - those of us who make up the entire population.

Ann

Six months suspended sentence for NF MOLE

UNLESS you are an avid reader of The Guardian, Time Out or the News of the World, you will probably not have heard of the most recent in this year's series of mole stories. In a case heard two weeks ago at the Old Bailey, carefully ignored by the press, we were told how narrowly the National Front had escaped a major reverse at the hands of Simon Read and comrade. This bastion of all that is bad in Britain had been infiltrated by Read, posing as a heavyweight racist, who achieved his purpose so well that he came to enjoy the complete confidence of leaders and minions alike.

His real purpose was to enter the Front's headquarters, have the nutty Derek Day drugged, photograph ant incriminating documents he could find, destroy the switchboard with acid and seal the safe with super glue. Regrettably, Read was arrested when Day, usually a model of stupefaction, failed to succumb, became suspicious and called the police, always the Front's greatest allies at times of crisis.

After a trial lasting five days, at which he was charged with intent to cause criminal damage, Read was given a six months sentence suspended for two years, a lighter penalty than had been anticipated.

Read had pleaded not guilty, submitting that his purpose had been to restrain the Front from pursuing its violent racist activity and committing far more serious crimes than that with which he was charged.

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"Outside Agitators" and "Political Extremists" and wait for it... "ANARCHISTS"

Burst of wild applause, cheering and shouts of 'Way to go!' and 'Why didn't I think of that?' Editor: 'I knew you'd like it!'. Now, Jeff, I want some fat juicy disclosures and revelations about how the riot was organised by white anarchists, check with Scotland Yard. They've had the Word and should be out arresting some anarchists now. So keep it nice and vague on the facts but BIG on the mystery. You know, "They found anarchist literature hidden in the flat", that sort of thing. Cathy, I want you to do some nice, sad, human interest stories, little old ladies, frightened to go out, brave wife of injured policeman, stuff like that. Charlie, I like the broken arm, but not enough bruises on the face; try again tonight! Charlie: 'But, Boss, I never got near the rioters, the police did this!'

Naturally, a judge conditioned to deal almost exclusively with preservation of property rights and maintenance of the status quo could never accept this as a legal defence, fearing that it would 'open the door to anarchy' and, in the event, it

Editor: Who cares who did it! I don't want excuses! Just get out there and get hurt! Now, the rest of you, there should be plenty of trouble tonight; if not, make some! I want Spectacle! Horror! Fear! Pathos! The Works! Now, go!

Next day:

Reporter: Hey, Boss, I got a great lead!

Editor: Lay it on me! Lay it on me!

Reporter: How about "Foreign Links"?

Editor: Oh, give it to me!

Reporter: And "French Anarchists"

Editor: I love it, I love it. More! More!

Reporter: "Secret Meetings in Smoky Back Rooms!"

Editor: You may stop kissing my feet and, yes, you may raise your head in my presence!

Reporters: Oh! Thank you! Great one!

Editor: This will knock shit out of our competitors. Just think of the increased circulation! The increased advertising revenue! Perhaps, even, an increase in my salary!..

MAK



MOLE continued

was allowed to be heard only in mitigation.

There were some who felt the political content of Read's plan should have been developed, thereby gaining greater media coverage and allowing such witnesses as Day and Richard Verrall to be placed in their true light as the proper defendants. However the merit of such a view is questionable because, in view of the judges comments, a guilty verdict (which the strength of the evidence made likely) would surely have resulted in a heavier sentence.

Ultimately, for one reason or another Read's plan was unsuccessful and may eventually be forgotten. Even so he has confirmed that anarchy must involve action as much as ideology and that revolution grows out of personal risk, not academic argument. Although this was only a small step towards a society which will exclude such obnoxious organisations as the National Front, it cannot be said that the door is open to anarchy yet. Read's action will serve as a reminder that it will have to be pushed rather than persuaded.

R.T.

Brokdorf

Dear Freedom,

I felt that vol. 42 no. 5 was one of the best issues of FREEDOM for some time. I was particularly interested in the article on the demonstrations in Brokdorf, as I had read in a German newspaper about this incident. The newspaper had three pages devoted to the demonstration; one describing what happened, and two pages with pictures of brave, young defenders of the Fatherland (no not the demonstrators, but your everyday fascists, known as policemen), who had been injured in the fighting.

One picture of a helicopter repell ing demonstrators said underneath it:- 'Civil war in Brokdorf : Helicopter defends police teams in front of attacking Demonstrators', maybe it should have been the other way around. Other pictures show police beating up demonstrators and keeping back crowds with 2½ foot batons, but making out the police as heroes and peace keepers and the demonstrators as the peace breakers.

However, if more mass demonstrations take place in the future then maybe we will soon be recognised as being very serious in our beliefs and actions.

Love and Anarchy
IAN KÖGEL of Oral Abortions

may day picnic

VE NUE:
Long Pond, Clapham Common, SW4.
Nearest tube, Clapham Common!
Bring a football.
For full details and map see enclosed leaflet.

Unfortunately, due to circumstances within our control the planned 'Anarchist Cabaret' for that evening has had to be cancelled.

FREEDOMS CONTACTS

Meetings

Torness Week of Action (May 9-17)

Leeds anti-nuclear power Group are hiring a 15-seat minibus to go to Torness, children welcome. Contact: Bill at Leeds 443920.

Worthing C.N.D. Demo.
May 16th

..... BRING YOUR FRIENDS
Ring Louise ... Worthing 206588

Desires

In Brixton in '78?

I am in the process of suing the Home Office for forcible injection of a drug. If you were in Brixton prison, in the Medical (F) Wing, between June 6 and June 13 1978, would you please write to me and

give details. Perhaps you know someone who was there, and they may now be serving time either there or elsewhere. If so, could you let me have details.

I would also be interested in any information anyone may have about drugging in prisons, particularly forcible injections.

This case is not just important for me; please help if you can.

Paul Barbara
45 Matilda House, St Katherine's Way, London, E1.

2nd Chance Project,
56 Dames Road, Forest Gate,
London E7.,
needs volunteers to work with
prisoners in a practical and sup-
portive way. Contact: Karl or
Allan on 01-555-0289.

Hull Libertarian Collective
are compiling a Contacts List. For
copy or inclusion please contact:
Chris Snell, 66 Mayfield St., Hull.

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Fassbinder: An autopsy of the West German bourgeoisie

AFTER the Second World War, the Americans dismantled the West German UFA company, which vied with the Hollywood studios, and set about rebuilding the cinemas and the distribution sector, says Thomas Elsaesser, in his essay on West German film-maker R. W. Fassbinder. And the Americans began inundating the country with their Hollywood products. The MPE legislation even prevented the West German Government from vetoing any US import. To be complete in that picture of neo-colonialism in the name of rebuilding Germany, the Americans employed the commercial weapon of dumping: Hollywood films were widely available and at cheap rate in W. Germany, indigenous pictures could not compete with them. At last, US profits were not frozen there, in opposition to what happened in Italy, in France, in Great Britain, where US pictures were on tour. 'Vae victis!'

A severe recession in film audience hit the dying W. German industry in the fifties and the Federal Government understood the emergency for subsidizing the film production sector. In 1962, the young German film-makers articulated some protest during a festival in Oberhausen, as well as claimed more federal money and more control over the distribution sector. As a result of their action, the 'Kuratorium junger Deutscher Film' was founded by the Government in 1965. Federal money and awards poured upon the New German cinema founded in Oberhausen. Film-schools sprouted in Berlin and Munich. Immediately challenged by the commercially oriented distributors, they fought back by founding in 1971 the 'Filmverlag der Autoren', the aim of which was and still is to secure distribution for the New German Cinema films.

Among the Filmverlag's members were Fassbinder, Wim Wenders, Geissendorfer. Within the tight boundaries of the capitalist system and its subsequent emphasis on values such as standardization versus nationalism, commercialism versus Art or Culture, the young W. German film-makers were doomed to hardship. However, the Filmverlag's success in controlling the distribution of its films in W. Germany of the eighties, Fassbinder's career as a film-maker and those of others of the same group, exemplify the possibility of self-expression, free criticism, change, even within the system.

At an aesthetic level, Fassbinder managed to transmute the outcome of low-budget conditions of production into new abstract patterns of visual beauty, disconcerting editing, in short a new style which held the attention, at various international film festivals of the sixties and seventies.

The New German Cinema achieved recognition.

At the present time, Fassbinder has lost his revolutionary touch and is exploiting to the full the Television outlet. 'I live in a Society which I criticize but which I need' he said in a 1971 interview. The society he lives in, the W. German bourgeoisie and its social partner, the working class, have been brilliantly elucidated in his films, to the point he may pretend to some University distinction in Politics, the day when movies would cease to be undervalued before the writing medium, the day when the bourgeoisie would be 'knocked down' according to his own words.

I tried to find out more about his filmic analysis of the W. German crisis and I found myself largely indebted to various French and German critics who dissected his work at leisure during private screening or interviewed him or directly witnessed his demarche. The book 'Fassbinder' edited by Tony Rays was also helpful.

So, what happens to the German people now, according to Fassbinder? Why terrorism may be understood as a rational, a healthy response to State violence or fascism, he perceives to be the actual disease of capitalism? The fact that he could utter his politically subversive message indicates that strong governments can afford the luxury of having dissidents, because the ideological battle doesn't matter very much anyway, since the brakes against revolution: work for a living, police terrors and army, are still in the hands of the dominating class. 'Naked State violence' was experimented with years ago, in May 68, as the ultimate obstacle, when ideological obstacles have crumbled.

The poster of 'The marriage of Maria Braun', one of his last films, claims that it gives 'screen acting a new sexual awareness'. Films must sell! Or is it that any meaningful film must be dipped into sex propaganda, in order to dilute the political lesson?

Two tendencies absolutely interweave in Fassbinder's films: Marxism and Expressionism. His analysis of the nuclear family, of the clash between classes, his expectation for proletarian revolution, blend harmoniously enough with the Ethics of Expressionism: the human brotherhood, life as a movement, as a discontinuity, the individual being smashed by society Roughly speaking, as an intellectual, he is a Marxist; as an artist and film-maker, he tends also to the Expressionist style. Fassbinder learnt his style from his fringe theatre experience in Munich and Berlin, till May 68, when his theatre was closed down by the police - a very potent argument indeed! He reiterated the theatre venture in 1974, but failed to bring about his project of a collective.

Fassbinder uses Expressionistic techniques: stylisation, distanciation. Most of his films deliberately avoid inducing the identification process in the spectator's mind. He considers it as a dope for the audience. 'Characters, stars, actors, narratives exist to disavow the anxiety of incompleteness experienced by the spectator.' T. Elsaesser. From the start, he challenges therefore his traditional role as a film-maker of the Hollywood dream factory type and firmly positions himself in the wake of intellectual film-making. Escapism is a sin against the people. From this neo-moral point of view derives his technique: a carefully broken structure of the film in order to bring about a new meaning. However Fassbinder doesn't square all the time with the Marxist schemes in film-making. Unlike an Eisenstein, for example, he relates the saga of the individual, instead of the group of people's one or a Nation's one. He remains obsessively interested in the individual, the middle class type.

In Fassbinder's world, the trouble begins in the family life, based on the marriage institution, a power structure in the Capitalist regime. There, the child develops tendencies for domination and destruction under his parent's physical and psychological coercion. These tendencies already permeate the daily life around him. 'The horror in daily life, I find it

much more impressive that if it is done artificially...' (interview in *Film Comment*, number 75.) When the child becomes an adult, the pattern slave/master he had seen at work all around - the male of the species being superior to the female, the elder to the young, the white race to the coloured one, the bourgeois class to the working class - that pattern sticks to his behaviour for ever after.

In 'Fox' 1975, Fassbinder stages the slave/master relationship between the social classes: Fox, a working class gay (played by Fassbinder himself) who happens to win a huge sum of money at the lottery, makes the fortune of his bourgeois lover. As a matter of fact, the worker has the money but the bourgeois has good manners; so the latter educates the former, like it or not. Fox loses his identity and apes a supposed superior deportment. 'All classes betray their own characters and favor the next higher. That's why we can wait a long time before a real revolution....' Ultimately, when Fox has been ruined, his mate leaves him. 'In a bourgeois society, all relationships have economic overtones.' Richard Dyer. In 'The bitter tears of Petra von Kant' 1972, Petra, played by Margit Carstensen, lives with her maid. When she is disappointed in love by Karin, (Hanna Schygulla) she tries to forget her class status and would like to find refuge in Marlene's presence, but Marlene rejects her because she doesn't know how to cope with the new equalitarian basis on which Petra wants to build their relationship, and because she can't forget her patroness' former attitude.

The slave/master relationship between the sexes or sado/masochism, is particularly explicit in 'Martha' 1973. Nowadays in England, the group 'Women against violence against Women' is lobbying in order to ensure that the use of sexual and physical violence within marriage, be a criminal offence, instead of being considered as one of the risks of the married life for the wife. In 'Martha', that thing happens and many more. When the poor soul runs away, she crashes her car and becomes crippled. She ends up his prey. Fassbinder comments thus: 'If Martha, at the end of the film is no longer among the living, then she's reached what she most deeply wanted... most men can't oppress as perfectly as women would like.' He sounds strangely misogynistic sometimes, but he doesn't favor his male characters either: 'Under Capitalism, men and women are despicable.'

Interview Frankfurt, 1975.

The master/slave relationship in bourgeois society recurs when the white race, the whole German folk encounter the foreign workers of Greece, Arabia, Turkey, who emigrated to Berlin and Munich, during the sixties. In 'Fear eats the soul' (Prix de la critique festival de Cannes, 1974) a German widow of sixty marries a middle aged Moroccan emigrant. They endure endless humiliation from the local shopkeepers, from the German middle class family, till he develops a stomach ailment while their marriage turns meaningless, because of society's pressures.

In 'Katzelmacher', 1969, a Greek emigrant falls a prey to capitalist exploitation because of his illiteracy and suffers physical violence at the hands of the natives who won't accept outsiders. Nowadays, the third world intellectuals justly complain about the European people's superiority complex.

In other films, the theme slave/master on a big scale, that which rules the rapports between two nations, Germany and America, for example, has been exploited. The situation which arises from the Allies occupation still infuriates many Left wing West Germans. As far as the film situation is concerned, US pictures on West German screens gross 60% of the box office returns, while German pictures hit hardly 20%. In the meanwhile, US big companies partly control the distribution system and US productions lure the best young German directors; no wonder that the vampire image still haunts several German film-makers, such as Geissendorfer in his first feature 'Jonathan'.

Fassbinder hints at the various emotional disappointments which the German girls endure from the soldiers transiently occupying their country, in 'Pioneers in Ingolstadt', 1970. He comments: 'Soldiers have to be brutal, superficial lovers because their profession makes them that...' In that precise case he may have thought that the European soldiers combined the victor's superiority complex, with the male superiority complex, in their restless affairs, the mixture turned out not

very palatable for the German girls.

In 'The marriage of Maria Braun' we see Maria's involvement with a black GI, and the complications which arise from the return of her presumed dead husband. Maria kills the GI, but the husband takes the blame and goes to jail for years. When he returns home for the second time, the marriage has failed. Probably Fassbinder intended to demonstrate here the moral wreck of most German women after the War.

We have seen the slave/master relationship pervading West German life, at the level of the classes, of the sexes, of race, at the level of the Nation. Moreover, the absence of love, the lack of social and political freedom, conspire to wreck the German middle class in particular. She is the first victim, because she has internalised the repression and has become the mere pawn of ideological and political forces. The theme of the victim fascinates Fassbinder, not only philosophically, but for its dramatic possibilities too. Here comes Fassbinder as an actor, a playwright, a director. Sometimes the emotionalism, the melodramatic qualities of the acting or of the mise en scene, overshadow the rational elements of his thesis upon German society. He has been accused of revelling in the depiction of sufferings and sadistic behaviours, inflicted upon women in particular. He excuses himself thus: 'Women interest me, they show their emotions more.'

His vision of the victim chills the blood, because none of them escapes towards a better future. As a matter of fact, he wanted to kill the middle class, so he enacted it at the fictional level, like many writers do. When any character of the Fassbinder world finds himself/herself in a position of victim, he/she moves for the worse, towards Evil.

We shall examine the issues the individual takes when the mechanics of capitalist society are going to grind him or her to powder:

Among the minor psychological issues:

- The stress :

Which can be conducive to more violence: In 'Wildwechsel' 1972, a young man resorts to the murder of his girlfriend's father who is the obstacle to their marriage. The Law doesn't allow them to marry, they are only fourteen and nineteen.

- The breakdown:

Happens to women in most cases. In 'The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant', when she finds herself rejected by Karin, Petra has a breakdown.

- The permanent neurosis:

A large number of Fassbinder's bourgeois heroines suffer from their nerves.

- The self inflicted brutalization:

With the view of suppressing one's sensibility, one's humanness, one deflects one's tensions unto the persons this Society has put under one's power: children, women, racial minorities, employees, animals... In 'Germany in Autumn' 1978, an intellectual with terrorist opinions played by Fassbinder himself, most of the time terrorizes his lover and mother with his violent discussions and endless arguments.

Another solution to society pressures in contemporaneous Germany:

- Drug-taking:

Tranquillizers, mood altering tablets, while psycho-surgery is probably looming in the near future, since chemicals can't operate all the time, on the patient. The USA influence in psychiatry permeates West Germany. Along the line comes alcoholism. In 'Angst von der Angst' 1975, a housewife is prescribed valium but doesn't eschew breakdown at the end. The housewife's malaise has been camouflaged with the media image of women: beautiful, healthy and sexy. That's the actual position of international Feminism. In 'Germany in Autumn' the hero takes cocaine.

However, most individuals in Fassbinder's world, and men in particular, who have not been taught to take it till hysteria, as women have been, do not satisfy themselves with those minor issues: they fall prey to suicide or madness, and here we have the last words on self-inflicted violence before we head on outwardly expressed violence.

- The suicide:

He elevates it to an Ethos, the supreme response an individual can give to an oppressive society. That doesn't mean he approves of it. Suicide is seen as the refusal, the manifesto for oneself, something similar to 'We shall not surrender.'

Roger Greenspun, in 'Film comment' speaks of Death as the completion of life that possibly has come to know the terms of its entrapment and exclusion.

In 'Why does Herr R run amok' 1969, the middle class hero, under job pressures and various psychological hangovers, hangs himself in the toilets after a mass-murder of neighbours and of his own family. In 'The Merchant of Four Seasons 1971, a fruit vendor who is tormented by his family and his wife, drinks himself to death. In 'Fox', the working glass gay takes an overdose of tranquillizers.

-Madness:

He says: 'Bourgeoisie has hysteria, workers have revolution.' Hysteria occurs when the class structures, artificial net, weigh so much upon the middle class psyche, that she loses control. In 'I Only Want You to Love Me' the tragic hero, under the burden of competitive capitalist society, expensive way of life in the cities, fails to support his family and loses his mind. In the meanwhile, he commits murder. That story was based on an original feature in West Germany.

In 'Despair' 1977, Herman, a chocolate manufacturer, tries to shun his miserable fate by exchanging his identity with a tramp, Weber, whom he installs in his home as the real Herman and disappears. His plan is to shoot him later with the view of Lydia, his wife, cashing the insurance money at the supposed Herman's death and joining him in Switzerland. But his wife betrays him and when the police come to arrest him, they find a lunatic. Many wives betray their husbands in Fassbinder's world. Society's ties in general tend to destroy the individual, rather than to buttress his progress in life.

Fassbinder thought a lot about suicide, but in his later years he developed strong sympathies for terrorism, gangsterism, all crimes against society. He came very near of a justification of crime in the family, in the office when he portrays an awful series of them in many first features. In 'Mother Kuster's Trip to Heaven', a worker kills his boss, and so on and so forth. The victim of a murder happens to be a close relative, wife or children, father in law, all standardized individuals, hyper-conscious of their roles and status more than aware of their own humanness. Capitalist society uses them as watchdogs for law and order; they are the Fassbinder's hero's oppressors by appointment. When wives and children are liquidated, they are so by being society's pillars, not because they are troublesome human beings. They are things. When the father in law meets his end, it is in retaliation of his oppressor role within the family structure. Fassbinder plainly justifies murder as the individuals revenge against oppressions and agitates the threat of it for those who dare undermine his hero's beautiful soul. It's pure anarchy in front of State oppression. But a question comes in mind: Who is entitled to be the hero?

The Fassbinderian hero, by the same token, is allowed to resort to gangsterism, since he repays society from that which he endured at its hands: he only uses the natural right to be free and to make a fortune.

Gangsters are victims of the bourgeoisie - 'Berlin 1971'. 'Gangsters goals are as bourgeois as the capitalists.' A gangster is a failed capitalist. Has he been born with the opportunity of making money legally, by good education, inherited family trade or whatever, he would never have been an outlaw. It's the bourgeois law which makes the outlaw; the bourgeois absolute control over one's destiny within a given social class in freezing the individual, once and for ever, gives rise to the gangster. The instinct of adventure and wealth, degenerates when it is prevented to develop. Here Marcuse comes at hand.

In his last film: 'The Third Generation' 1979, Fassbinder expresses his obsession with terrorism. He is not one but he analyses the mechanisms of its appearance when natural instincts are corrupted. As a matter of fact, the bourgeois upper class in West Germany live now more or less under the fear of being kidnapped, not for ransom, but for secret trial and execution - or of being shot on the street - a radical action which saves time, speeches and money. Nowadays an international order, an alternative order, is born from the Baader-Meinhoff activities in West Germany, and Fassbinder advocates it as a self-defence action.

Did he manage a fire escape for the West German middle class he hated so much? That class which is a victim and an

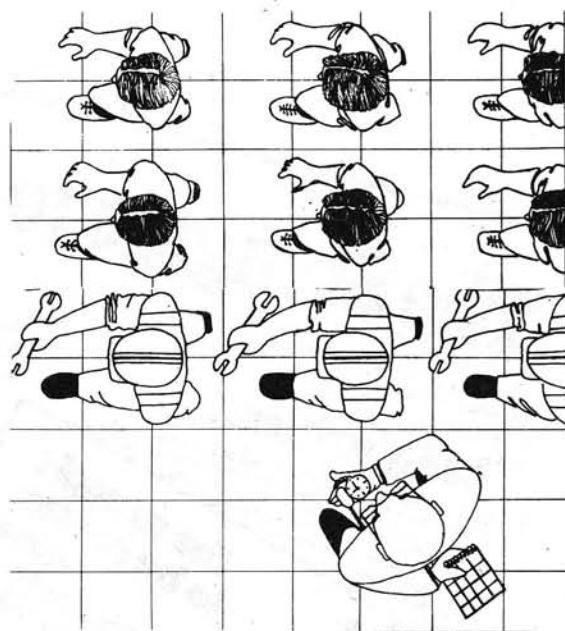


Illustration taken from 'Bicycle'

oppressor at the same time. In a sense, watching his films would be one. 'The realism in my films can lead the people to discover their own reality, or towards one utopia, because they have the possibility of comparison and are not hammered upon that which they are continually living in.' February 1974. 'People must have the possibility of discovering beautiful things. Fairy tales are sometimes peopled by evil characters, this makes the people sick. I want to tell happy tales to cure the people...'

His films function thus as a cure for the middle class and the working class. He doesn't give lessons for each but presents the facts which run their lives and hopes for the best, an injection of love in their lives. But in none of his films has a middle class protagonist begun a process of change. Only the working class interests him. In 'Eight Hours are Not a Day', the workers carry responsibilities, show solidarity and humanness, whereas the middle class succumbs to alienation. That humanness, worker's independence and self-promotion, doesn't spring from any preliminary political education. The proletariat will provide for himself. In 'Mother Kuster's' he mocks alternatively the Communist Party, the Ecologist Left Wing and he says in life that no ideology could satisfy him. 'I am not interested in theories but in liberating myself from my oppressions.'

His youth thesis: Germany as death in life, where life appears in revolts, murders, suicides, madness, seems to show some wrinkles. The West Germany of the 'eighties appears the leading nation in Cinema initiatives, in feminism, in alternative styles:

The 'Filmverlag der Autoren' makes profits and controls distribution, as well as the 'Neue Constantin' circuit and the Americans. Cinema audiences are increasing, alternative cinemas are opened in Frankfurt, Berlin is fast becoming the centre of counter-culture. As far as strictly film-making is concerned, and for the subsidies question, government censorship hits only the synopsis and not the dialogue.

Some lessons must have been learnt, at last ...
Fassbinder may rejoice !

If the working class revolution has any chance to happen in West Germany, one of the first steps towards it, the regaining control of the US dominated showing-rooms and filmic industry, has been enacted by the new German Cinema. In the political and economical perspective the New German Cinema deserves the workers' respect, and Fassbinder, in particular, may be called a national hero: the middle class bodysnatcher in a sense. He surely worked the German ideological miracle !

Review

The Struggle to be Human

The following are two reviews of the book, *The struggle to be human: crime, criminology and anarchism*. By L. Tiff & D. Sullivan. Cienfuegos Press 1980, available from Freedom Bookshop.

'Badly written..'

THIS is a garrulous, repetitive and badly written book, in which a fascinating and important topic is buried beneath a welter of meaningless Californian-style patter. The authors write plain (American) prose. (Criminologists) must read it into an energy... sentences which make the reader

nascent scientist can babbble, so entire book, inflict harm for a cosmic demands of rationality nor be to count on a fantasy'. Even for the few me to rationalism' and a statement and press on their part, or even would have better seen the book? 'Modern criminology is on the brink of extinction', one doubts it. A criminology can be divided into two main camps: official criminology (Cambridge Institute of Criminology, Office researchers), and out of the National Deviance. Neither camp shows any signs of spending cuts, continues its quest for 'appropriate' strategy and deviance. Secure in its position, it remains responsible.

the struggle to be human crime criminology & anarchism



L.Tiff & D.Sullivan

This drift into what Stuart Hall has called a 'law and order' society manifests itself in a variety of forms: in the development and surveillance of a whole technology of political sections .. relentless invective'

"THE STRUGGLE TO BE HUMAN" by L. Tiff and D. Sullivan (Cienfuegos Press, £5.00) is an invective, relentlessly carried through one hundred and fifty pages, against the law, its supports and supporters, the interests it affects, and the arguments that are invoked for its justification. Nothing can be right with the law, and that for the simple reason that it is one with the state, and the state is the strongest of all wrongs, wrong erected into a system and making itself as right. Anarchists need not be told what is wrong with the law or the state, whilst other people think it is as favourable of both according to the degree to which they feel and think themselves injured or protected by it. Even anarchists may have something to learn from it, especially concerning innovations and institutions, outlooks which are not what they seem or claim, many ways of doing the very job which the law and its agents are meant to do. The book is an important document. The 'struggle' is felt throughout, and it is not. Both style and vocabulary are harsh, and as for the feel of human beings, it does not give us much of a sense of humanity. If it is written by Americans and for Americans, today it is far more of a document than it is in any other country, reflecting the highest degree of capitalist disregard for culture and its most favourable conditions.

There cannot be much of a future. Culture is first and foremost a heritage from the past. Our roots are in the past, and as a result of the soil in which it is rooted, and the light of the sun, so in order to move forward and the future are not enough; our assurance of past experiences.

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THE two reviews by Eric Hyde and Giovanni Beldelli on 'The Struggle to be Human' by L. Tiff and D. Sullivan, published by Cienfuegos Press, and which appeared in FREEDOM on 13 March have sparked off in me a train of thought which could possibly be worth a little consideration.

In the case of Eric Hyde there is a tendency to criticise Tiff and Sullivan on the ground chosen by them. I should like, however, to cast my eye beyond the circumscribed spheres of crime and criminology and the attempts to adjust social relations within different societies, however varied they may be. For my part, I was much attracted by the possibilities envisioned in the title of the book but was disappointed by the content I found therein. This was made very difficult by the unavailing language which Eric Hyde has had a go at. It seems to me that freedom cannot be explained or understood only in terms of the environment but Tiff's and Sullivan's investigation of possible alternatives ends up in a vague obscurity. Freedom does not depend entirely on external circumstances, significant though these circumstances undoubtedly are. So significant indeed that they have, by means of the hypnotising fascination of our present day's economic belly-dance, taken all attention away from any other idea of a solution. The point I want to make is that the struggle towards freedom itself can only be identified with the struggle towards the development of the individual into a fully fledged and completely fulfilled human being.

Immediately, of course, having said this, one runs into all the well-known contradictions. Is this just an individual problem? The Ego and his Own? It would appear that this is not

just a concern for anarchists alone. Malcolm Muggeridge, for instance, agrees with Solzhenitsyn that it is possible to be imprisoned in a concentration camp and still to be free. Freedom, in this view, has to do with the inner self, with what is known as the soul - a word with very religious connotations - and I am reminded of Tolstoy's conception that the Kingdom of God is within You. This brings me, precipitately me, I should say, into the whirlpool of unresolved controversy.

Nevertheless, I must stick to my point and say that the struggle towards freedom is the same thing as the struggle to be human. This indeed is what Max Stirner might have said. There is, however, another word in this worthy of a closer look, and that is the word struggle. What is it that we have to struggle against?

Life is indeed a struggle and to be human is to be able to reach out beyond the constraints and the oppressions which restrict the development of all the faculties and potentialities which are present but dormant in every awakening individual, sadly and rarely ever find a satisfying means of expression. Growing up as a human being is like a plant struggling towards the light, as Giovanni indicates. The darkness and the shadows are also present for humans but not always easily identifiable. Indeed darkness can be so unrecognisable that it can be welcomed. And this fear of the light seeks out the escape routes into the shady sanctuaries which society and the state so kindly provide. But the youthful endeavour towards fulfilment finds itself diverted and frustrated and all too frequently discarded for a tinsel-decked substitute or the deceitful urge towards the cheap plaudits of a little spurious fame. And the

glimpse of the dream that might have been is gone and lost forever, and the world is a grey place peopled with dehumanised, mole-like bipeds, competitively, enviously and destructively digging over and over again through the same ground with different tools but with their eyes permanently dimmed in the tunnels in which they willy-nilly burrow. The struggle becomes endless and purposeless like the movement on a treadmill suspended over a death-pit. Life becomes no more than the clinging to the cliff's edge of survival and struggle an end in itself.

In fact the two words, life and struggle, are so related as to be almost synonymous. Any attempt to separate them from each other would not only deny the whole concept of evolution itself, but would produce, as is so evident in our affluent, industrialised, welfare state, the unhappy but commonplace mental condition where the mind becomes a collection of isolated status quo, each immovable within its own detached mini-mausoleum, and the resultant knowledge is no more than the bric-a-brac exhibition made by Shakespeare's "snapper-up of ill considered trifles", whose chief consideration is their marketable value. And the creature whose cranium is thus packaged may look like a human being but the life that is in it has never evolved beyond the necessities of childhood and the blind and roping urge to live remains primitive and animal-like, completely insulated from the mechanised computer in its head. Struggle implies movement, and there is no movement between the artificially robotised ganglia which control the academic existence of this modern product of our industrial civilisation. We have only to look at the infantile performances which take place daily among our ruling elite and listen to the chatter from the House of Commons on the radio to realise that these people will say anything to get their own way for the moment, just as little children do, and having succeeded in their little game, they then act out in just the opposite way. It is not that they assume that everyone has forgotten. They also have forgotten. They have discarded yesterday. Today's competition is a different story. More lies. At least we call them lies. To them they are not lies. They are the accepted means of achieving power. That word embodies all they know of truth.

Power today in our world is a fake. This is not to say that all the people engaged in the pretentious performance of the current opera bouffe on the stage-set of our present theatrical management is in a state of dementia. Not at all. Although one might say that in a demented world it is only the sane who are regarded as freaks and threatened with incarceration in houses of correction, but even they, whatever quirks of conscience they may suppress, play their parts and carry out the pantomime until the roles they play override their personalities and become their only reality. And the audience, in its turn, is carefully conditioned to applaud at appropriate intervals. Which it largely and compliantly does. And that is where the power lies.

Would it not be wonderful for the power structure in any society if the toiling masses were completely turned into obedient robots? Everyone patterned out to perform his or her required task like the ants in an ants' nest? Their brains lobotomised and carefully stacked up with state-approved micro chips? The fact that such an unchanging and easily controllable state of affairs has been exalted by the name of Utopia indicates a prevailing and dangerous attitude of mind. Such is the conception of Peace in the belief of an establishment with a static mentality which rejects all forms of struggle, especially, of course, when it emerges from below. What a nuisance these humans are!

This conditioning process which operates in what we call our civilisation was not always quite so false. Tradition continually asserts itself in the minds of the inert and habit is turned into a culture which takes on the comfort of security, and that which was once a stronghold for the preservation of life becomes a prison in which only ghosts perform. Ghosts, however, which have the power to crush the eager springs of life which leap for freedom.

So here I am back to my question. What is it that we have to struggle against? Once upon a time it was nature - a hostile world in which gregarious humans banded together to survive. Civilisation, like an ants' nest in the desert, was a device to ensure survival. Slaves, like the worker ants, were part of the

whole. Their role was an accepted one; indeed, superstition and credulity being their only faith, they were so limited that, as Gordon Childe suggested, it would have been an act of piety to become a slave. The sacrifice of the self for the good of the whole is still with us as the kamikaze pilots demonstrated so ostentatiously in the last war. The kamikaze, however, made his supreme sacrifice in a brief moment of time. The sacrifice of a whole lifetime, however, since it is not done so spectacularly, becomes the conventional mode of existence.

Civilisation in our day has overcome the ancient struggle against nature. It has left us, however, with its structure. The necessity to weld the community together against a hostile environment is no longer necessary. But the devices which were used are not so easily relinquished and power, once tasted, has to be swallowed in. It becomes the supreme agent in the prevention of the development of the minds of its subjects. Dependence is its means of support and this it maintains because thinking is a dangerous activity and the petrification of the minds of the subservient is perpetuated by methods which are best illustrated by flamboyant exhibitionism, vulgar demonstration and the clamour for applause. Witness the display at royal weddings, state receptions - a deference and adulation now being extended to the shadowy heroes and heroines of the television screen. I must not forget what is most important, and that is the money system. The distribution of this carefully calculated dispensation has become the substitute for the real wealth which, not stacked in the vaults of banks, could become an incalculable treasure in the minds of men and women. As it is empty minds are mollified by having their eyes dazzled by the fantasies of exterior glitter. And we are left with the piles of waste dumped in disfiguring heaps on the countryside and the fouled-up lakes and seas which are being turned into cess-pits.

The struggle to be human is the struggle to emerge from the animal world - evolution in minuscule - which we all go through in our growth from the womb to adulthood. It is in the interests of power to check this growth and since the routine chores of the production line require only a fraction of the potential intellectual faculties with which we are endowed, these pristine abilities are never put into use and atrophy into the state of redundancy which is another of the mainstays of authority. Just how much of the animal dominates the modern scene is a matter of speculation, but certain it is that the struggle to be human in our day and age is indeed a struggle. Even the primitive savage at the hunting stage of human development had to do everything for him or herself. Nowadays, in our urbanised industrial civilisation, people are patterned out to do one job and that a mind destroying, unchanging, stereotyped fragment of a wider practice. And when they retire, free at last, their only thought is to try to continue in the chains they have reluctantly lost. This restriction does not only apply to the worker on the production line. It is revealed in the strangely alienated minds of the academics who are presented to us as our teachers. I am reminded of a story told by Robert Robinson on the radio about an Oxford don who was pumping up a bicycle tyre. When he was told that the front tyre was down and he was pumping up the back tyre he said, "Well, there is a connection, isn't there?"

It is an old saying that the revolutionary of twenty becomes the conservative of forty. Considering the pressures which are brought to bear, this is not to be wondered at. But nevertheless the thwarted youthful growth kicks at its prison doors and can only express itself in one way, and that is by violence. Growing up in a normal way is a process of natural unfolding and although not entirely painless, the pain of such development provides the joy of life. But when the old husk of the seed will not give way, or the shell not break, the life that is inside must use violence or it will die.

I agree with Giovanni Baldelli who discusses the book as an impassioned one. "The struggle is felt throughout", he says, "whilst to be human is not." One feels that the authors, Tiffet and Sullivan, are battering with their fists on the bars of their intellectual enclosure and trying to get out but only finding an escape into a vacuum of sterile verbiage. This is the academic problem. There is no way out in that direction.

Alternatively, the purely practical battle against authority inevitably leads us to attempt so-called victories from which

Politics is for People

Politics Is For People. (Shirley Williams).

Penguin. £2.50

If 'politics is for people' expresses a part of Shirley Williams' message, another important part that this book also shows is that she is one of the people it is for. The book is a slight one. It is not particularly lengthy and it is by no means weighty. There is no original idea or thought in the book, but to be fair to Mrs. Williams, she would not claim that there was. What she is doing in this book, quite apart from reinforcing my view that the only interpretation of politicians' actions that makes sense is the cynical one, is to present an approach to the problems confronting politicians that appears to be distinct from the devalued and rejected policies that were the consensus of the 1950s and 60s, but which is still reasonable, realistic, rational and compassionate. Here she has a problem which, on the evidence of this book, she is unable to solve. The monetarist alternative of the present Conservative leadership and the 'socialism and siege economy' strategy of Labour's parliamentary left do not appeal to her. This is not unreasonable, as monetarism is palpably failing, and the principal left wing strategy, if ever tried, will fail just as surely.

So Mrs. Williams offers us what. In brief, a set of policies too close to those used in the 1960s and now rejected for them to have much hope of large-scale electoral support in the 1980s. The only difference is that her presentation has a zeal and idealism of a kind we have become accustomed to observing in politicians out of office, but which we know disappear when they regain ministerial office, cabinet seats, civil servants to brief them and government chauffeurs to drive them. Though to be strictly fair, one should acknowledge that Mrs. Williams is one of the politicians who maintains her zeal when in office. But a review of her ministerial achievement only calls for the comment 'much use it was'. She was a leading figure in the Labour government of 1974-79, and nobody will ever pretend that those years signified any meaningful steps forward in the human situation, still less that her achievement of high office caused the world to shift on its axis. Until she is able to confront and deal with this problem of the gaining of high office not making any appreciable difference to anything her intellectual pretensions will remain apparent to the perceptive observer of the political scene.

Her main purpose in the book is not to present policies on



particular issues. Rather it is to create an impression of herself and her political stance. The impression of her we are supposed to accept is that she is a highly articulate and intelligent politician (true) and that she has a strategy to make the necessary radical changes in the institutional relationships in this country (false) that she is a person of great experience and compassion (true) and that she will find effective means to reform our society into one based on humanity and mutual respect (false). There is no doubt of the sincerity of her desire for radical change, but every doubt that she has a sufficient grasp of how the system operates to perpetuate itself, preserve the status quo and nullify any intended change. Apart from this, for a politician of her experience, some of her statements strike one as being of a staggering naivety. She writes:-

'Microprocessors will have a major impact on office work, making such familiar skills as filing or shorthand-typing obsolete in a few years. Data recorded on magnetic tape is available almost instantaneously. Administrators and executives will be able to get up to date displays of accounts and sales records on their desk terminals. Managers will summon computer print outs showing in exact detail what stage a manufacturing process has reached, or how many of a given item have been produced. They will convey their own decisions by programming their own computer in simple language. As machines become capable of recognising individual voices and responding to them, people will be able to dictate directly to automatic typewriters, or to instruct computers over a telephone.'

All the things she posits in this extract are possible. It is the assertion that they will come about 'within a few years' that takes the breath away. This refusal or inability to take into account simple human cussedness and resistance to change has always thankfully been a stumbling block for professional politicians intent on designing utopias for us. It seems odd to find such a blind spot in a convert to the Roman Catholic faith, but Mrs. Williams has it. We may hope that this failure of hers, and continuing bloody mindedness on our side, may yet deliver us from the dreadful utopian society which Malcolm Muggeridge has well described as a collectivist nightmare, that she and her colleagues wish to bring about for us.

PETER MILLER

STRUGGLE TO BE HUMAN cont. from page 13

we may learn nothing. We have only to look at the blind violence expressed in vandalism or the activities of the skinheads in the National Front to recognise also that this will lead only to a dead end. Violence and hooliganism at football matches become an end in themselves - a false means of satisfaction in a mind-restricting prison.

The trade union movement was once closely allied to the ideas of socialism. The victories that were won inspired a confidence and an independence and an understanding. The struggle to be human began to have a meaning; every strike opened another door in the mind. Sadly, nowadays, socialism and communism have lost their hopeful meanings, destroyed by the dehumanised power seekers. We now have the Solidarity movement in Poland turning back towards the Middle Ages and the Catholic church, seeking an old form of established authority before which to kneel down and pay homage. Muggeridge and

Solzhenitsyn, it would appear, also seek this solution. The struggle towards the full dignity of human potentials is only hampered and frustrated by these inhibitions.

My criticism of Tiffet and Sullivan is that their book is based on the totally fallacious assumption that the world is made up of rational people to whom it is necessary to appeal with evangelical ardour in order that they will do the right thing and behave properly. 'We must do this ... We must that ... We must ... We must ...' they cry.

This kind of appeal has been going on in the Christian church for nearly two thousand years. The result has been tragically negative. They preach only to the converted.

If people are to become rational humans possessed with what Oscar Wilde called the 'Soul of Man under Socialism' it is necessary to be able to analyse and to understand the forces that prevent this development. These are still exterior forces and the fight is still on.

THEO YEATS

Civil War Verse

It is the logic of our times,
No subject for immortal verse,
That we who lived by honest dreams
Defend the bad against the worse.
Cecil Day Lewis. 1941.

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF SPANISH CIVIL WAR VERSE

Edited by Valentine Cunningham £2.95

Available from FREEDOM Bookshop

IN the Autumn of 1980 I came across this book in a bookshop and bought it because I recognised someone on the cover. This man stayed at our house just before he went to Spain as an ambulance driver. He went a Communist Party sympathiser and had to flee for his life, not from the fascists but the communists.

From an anarchist point of view the most interesting part of this book is the introduction. I am surprised that no anarchist journal has reviewed it. It is a story of deception and falsification with which we are only too familiar. In fact only The New Leader, the newly revived anarchist press and a few trotskyist journals gave any alternative to the party line.

July 1936 was the month in which Franco staged his coup and October of that same year was when Mosley and 2 or 3 thousand fascists protected by 6 to 7 thousand policemen attempted to march through the East End of London and were halted and turned back.

At that time I had connections with the L.L.P., who were the first organisation to take money to Spain. John McNair, the general secretary, went to Barcelona with it and made contact with the P.O.U.M. and similar libertarian socialist parties.

By many it was regarded as a poets and writers war and nearly all the left ones had Communist Party sympathies, of which the party made good use to push the party line. The fact that the anarchist dimension played an enormous part in frustrating an immediate victory of the rebel generals was largely played down. In fact when Orwell, having to escape the attentions of the communists, tried to put the record straight, it was turned down by The New Statesman. Gollancz of the Left Book Club turned down Homenaje a Cataluña, they also being dominated by the Communist Party.

However, the significance of what was happening in Spain was not lost on the so-called democratic Powers who while

not too happy about German and Italian intervention sealed the fate of the revolution by the Non Intervention Agreement. Stalin knocked a few nails in the coffin himself, reluctant to send aid to a revolution dominated by anarchists and libertarians, the aid was late and not only a financial price was exacted, but a political price as well. Kronstadt was repeated.

The issues came to the surface in the civil war - the totalitarian nature of state socialism - and Orwell expressed them first in Homenaje a Cataluña and more fully in Animal Farm and 1984.

The fundamental nature of the change in Spain was evident in the first months. In Barcelona in August 1936 Franz Borkenau wrote - 'It was like going into a new continent', 'before our eyes, in a flash unfolded itself the revolution.'

Philip Toynbee's diary during Xmas 1936 said - 'The streets (of Barcelona) were full of those sweet skivvies uniforms, the buses and trams had U.G.T. and C.N.T. written on them - so had the trains. The place had a carnival atmosphere, "en pleine révolution". It is a workers' city at war fighting to keep its trams and cinemas and industries in workers' hands. I felt so wildly excited and yet so wretched at being "a student delegate". A French anarchist militiaman asked us which front we were going to and it was bloody to have to say, to Madrid to look round Anyway it was intoxicating being in a city which is ours, and seeing uniforms which one can delight in.'

The political cynicism, the impotence of the world workers' movement helped to crush the flower that was about to unfold. As the introduction says - 'The case of Orwell and the case Orwell puts sets the issue of truthfulness firmly at the centre of any discussion of the literature of the Spanish Civil War. The deepest impression he carried with him from Spain was of the insidiousness of propaganda - not just the anti-revolutionary horror mongering of most of the British Press, but the distorting Communist and International Brigade line against the POUM with whom he had fought, a line swallowed and diligently put about by the periodicals and spokesmen of the left.'

Like most anthologies it is a mixed bag, but as a history, and to get the feel of the times it is worth reading with a bit of nostalgia for us ageing anarchists with our ageless philosophy.

ALAN ALBON

The bomb and the pen

PRISON LETTERS by John Jenkins. P/b. 144pp. ISBN 0 86243 010 0 £1.95. Pub. Y Lolfa, Talybont, Dyfed, SY24 5HE, Wales.

Trade enquiries to publishers. Single copies available from Neges Bookshop, 31 Alexandra Road, Abertawe (Swansea), SA1 5DQ, Wales. Price £1.95 plus 25p postage. Also through FREEDOM Bookshop

THE pen, it is said, is mightier than the sword. If that were so, those who would squash Britain's corrupt, gargantuan, unworkable and undemocratic institutions of government would be well advanced. For swords they have few, but pens - and words - they have aplenty.

However, something has gone wrong. There are too many bearers of the Ultimate Truth, each bearing a sacred set of trendy initials. Their pens spray ink in each others eyes, and the real enemies of the people sit back with a tin of brasso to clean their swords - or riot shields, or cruise missiles.

Nowhere is this more true than in Wales. It is a well-known

fact that four Welsh people gathered together will represent five points of view, and will set up six committees to discuss them. Their arguments rage in any pub you care to suggest - and plodding, tedious, apathetic life goes on in the street outside for the working class of Wales.

Any group of armchair revolutionaries can claim to be the 'voice of the working class'. But if the working class don't know it there's not much point.

Once in a while someone or something appears on the scene which disturbs this moribund equilibrium, in which the massed pens of the 'Sun' and the British State mockingly splatter great ink globules over the frenetic writings of the alternative society.

Such a something is happening now. Accompanied by much shaking of indignant jowls from Thompson Regional Newspapers, holiday cottages and Conservative clubs all over Wales are disappearing in moonlit smoke, and ordinary people everywhere think it's great. A mass political consciousness is starting to dawn.

cont. over

The Bomb and the Pen (cont. from Page 15)

Another 'something' happened in the late 1960's. Following the murder of Tryweryn community, whose valley was flooded to satisfy Liverpool's lust for water, militant organisations arose in Wales which fought for Welsh freedom with bombs, not pens. Water pipelines, tax offices, dams and government buildings all enjoyed instantaneous structural alterations.

The establishment told us in ever more desperate tones that we, i.e. the people of Wales, totally rejected this abominable descent to mindless violence (although avoiding danger to life was the prime consideration in the bombers' choice of targets). But somehow 'we' didn't respond, and instead Wales started to embrace the national cause with increasing enthusiasm.

Out of all the people involved in the '60s bombing campaign few were caught. John Jenkins was. He served seven years of a ten year sentence - mostly as a Category A prisoner in Albany top-security gaol - and he emerged in 1976 completely unshaken in his beliefs. According to John Jenkins the British State must be dismantled, a free, decentralist, socialist, Welsh Wales is worth fighting and dying for, and his tactics were the right ones.

Since his release from prison, Jenkins has led a low-key existence - being under constant Special Branch attention leaves little choice - but from his rare public statements has emerged a picture of a sensitive, intelligent and dedicated man whose courage and sacrifice in the Welsh cause evoke high respect even amongst his enemies, of whom there are many.

Now, the letters that John Jenkins wrote from prison to his relatives and friends have been collected and published. And what remarkable letters they are! We are used to 'letters from prison' by various revolutionaries. They often seem a bit too good to be true - possibly written by some enlightened Satchi and Satchi in South America.

But Prison Letters by John Jenkins contains a real feel of authenticity, and much, much more. They show a man experiencing the doubts and agonies experienced by anyone incarcerated for a long prison sentence; they show the ridiculous gratitude that such a simple thing as receiving a Christmas card can provoke in a caged human being; they are often highly humourous, and they show that even in his darkest days John Jenkins' political mind was as sharp as an ancient Celtic sword - destroying his critics, supporting his allies, and exposing with a brilliant clarity the political reality of the Wales which he loves.

He is ruthless in his condemnation of such institutions as Wales' daily paper, the 'Western Mail'. Plaid Cymru, the nationalist party, is pilloried for failing to grasp the initiative following the successes of the direct action campaign, but instead declining into a respectable, middle-class and cultural club. The English left gets a terrible mauling for its blind spot about the 'National Question' on its own doorstep, and the Socialist Worker paper in one biting paragraph is exposed as the enormous irrelevance to Wales which it is - but shouldn't be.

However most of his letters are constructive. The techniques of overthrowing the State are outlined by a man who had seen the battle from both sides (he was a British Army sergeant until he was arrested), although the prison censors have bitten deeply into those portions of his writings. Ireland, Bangladesh, the cultural/economic link in politics - many themes are discussed with a brevity and economy of words accidentally enforced by prison regulations, which decreed that only two letters a week could be sent, and they must be brief.

In these regulations is to be found the cause for the only serious criticism of the book. It is too short. The world could happily stand a few more letters from John Jenkins in prison.

It is not often that a book moves me, cynical socialist/nationalist/anarchist that I seem to be. But this one did. It's brilliant, and every activist should read it.

MEURIG PARRI

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